

# The Athenian Mercury:

Tuesday, January 24. 1693.

Quest. 1.

**A** Friend of mine, who is a Captain in — Regiment, and at present Quartered in K — y, acquainted me about a fortnight ago, that a certain Person affronted him in a very high degree at a drinking Entertainment, for which he design'd instantly to demand Satisfaction; I urg'd to him all the Arguments I could think of to dissuade him from it; I convinc'd him from Natural Reason, from Scripture, the Laws of the Land, both Civil and Military, that it was unpardonable; I shew'd him an express Article against Duelling, in the Orders published by Their Majesties: In short, I brought my Argument so home, that (being a Person of Sense and Learning) he ingeniously confess'd he could not defend it, yet said it was the Custom in the Camp, and he should be laugh'd at if he did not endeavour to get his Blood who had abus'd him; nay, he represented to his Superior Officers as a Coward, and so lost his Commission — that there was never an Officer in the Army who would put up such an Affront — that 'twas true, all Men of the Gown (like my self) condemn'd it, but that there would be no living in the Camp for any Man who should thus sneakingly receive an Affront, and not fight the Person who gave it. However Gent. he is resolv'd to delay his Revenge till he hears from you; and if you can tell him any way to avoid Ignominy, and secure his present Post and Reputation in the Army without fighting, he has promis'd me faithfully, (and I hope he will be as good as his word) he will not resent it: Your Answer is desired with speed, my Friend pretending his Honour will suffer in the mean time?

**Ans.** You made choice of the best Topicks to ground your Arguments upon; and if they were conclusive against the Captains mistaken Notions of Honour, they would be no less against his Superior Officers under the same Circumstances. The Question is not properly, how he shou'd avoid Disgrace by not fighting, but rather how he shou'd avoid the Disgrace of fighting, which is only honourable (in private Cases) when the Law of Self-preservation becomes a Warrant: We should be always ready to do great Actions, and that would show we were capable of less. If the Captain upon all Occasions shows himself willing and ready to serve Their Majesties, in any Expedition his Superior Officers shall Command him, he can't want the real Character of a Wise and Brave Man, and will deserve better at Their Majesties hands, than by killing one of their Subjects for a Trifle, or dying himself a Sacrifice to Passion, and the prejudices of Custom.

**Quest. 2.** I am a Chaplain in a certain Family, which is not so Regular and Religious as I could wish it. I am forc'd to see Misses Drinking, Gaming, &c. and dare not open my Mouth against them, supposing from the little notice that is taken of me in matters of Religion, and Sober Conversation, and the great distance my Patron keeps, that if I should pretend to blame any thing of that Nature, it would occasion nothing but the turning me out of the Family. In the mean time, unless I do speak, and modestly remonstrate, I think I do not what becomes a Minister of Religion, and am afraid may another day be justly condemn'd as Partaker in other Mens Sins. Therefore, Gent. my humble Request is to know of you, what I ought to do, neither to betray the Cause of Religion, nor give Offense. I would gladly be satisfied what is the Duty of a Chaplain in this, or other Cases, and how far he is oblig'd to take Care of the Morals of the Family he lives in: Your Answer may be of use to a great many beside my self, and 'tis another Grief, that my Case is far from being singular: I cannot believe that to say Grace, and read Prayers (now and then when my Patron is at leisure) is all the Duty of a Chaplain, yet I find we all think we have done enough, when we have done that?

**Ans.** The Pulpit is a priviledg'd place, whereas

Custom has given you Authority to speak: So you may with that Prudence moderate your Discourse, as either to accomplish a Reformation, or at least acquit your self, and discharge your own Duty. Righteousness, Temperance, and the Judgment to come, if reason'd upon as they were almost seventeen Ages since, may find a second *Felix*. The Pulpit (as we said before) is the most (sometimes the only) proper place to convince Strangers of their Faults, but private Retirements are convenient for Friends and Familiars. These are Rules of Latitude, but all the World is reducible to one of them, and the practice is indispensable.

**Quest. 3.** Whence arose the Custom of allowing the Benefit of the Clergy to some Offenders, if it was to transcribe Manuscripts (as some say) before the Art of Printing was known, why is its stile continued, since that Reason is long ago ceased?

**Ans.** In the Extream times of Popish Ignorance, when Monks themselves could scarce understand, or read Latin, and the Common People were wholly ignorant of it, the Monks had that privilege of reading their Neck-verse, whatever Villanies they committed, whilst the illiterate Vulgar dy'd for it, and thence came the Benefit of the Clergy; but why 'tis yet continued, we know not, unless those Statutes were never Repeal'd since the Monks flourish'd in this Kingdom. Possibly the first Custom in this Nation came from the old Romans, who sometimes pardon'd Criminals upon the repeating of

*Tu potis es nigrum, vitio prefigere Theta.*

**Quest. 4.** What is your Opinion of the Star that appeared at our Saviours Birth, and went before the Wise men, its Nature, Magnitude, Height, and Duration?

**Ans.** 'Tis very probable, that 'twas a sort of a Comet apparently like a Common Star, because it was so low as to seem to stand over the place where our Saviour was Born; for if it had been but as high as the Moon, it would have appeared yet further off, when the Wise men came to *Bethlehem*: For the rest, we find no credible Author amongst the Ancients that makes any mention of it.

**Quest. 5.** A certain Baronet in this Kingdom dying some months ago, left in Charge, that his Eldest Son (not then above 9 years of Age) should never be called Sir William — nor be told he should have an Estate, till he be of Age. This Charge was grounded on an Observation, That when young Boys are acquainted with their Estates and Qualities, they will set up for Men too soon, &c. Query, Whether this Method will prevent that Mischief, or make worse?

**Ans.** We think, (and we have the practice of a great many of our side) That Young Sir William, committed to good Guardians, is better provided for against those Extravagancies mention'd in the Question, than by such methods, for sudden Honours scarce ever find a Master that is not made up of Slavery and Pride.

**Quest. 6.** An Acquaintance of mine Court'd a Young Lady, gained her Affections, and the Wedding-day was appointed, but thro' the Means of some of his Friends the Match broke off. Now the Gentleman being cross'd in his Love, Court'd another, contrary to his Friends Knowledge, and in the horns of his Love told this which he Court'd last, That if he had not her, he desired he might never prosper if ever he altered his Condition, and several Vows which I think is not convenient to mention: But the matter coming to their Friends ears, they will not give their Consent, and it is past all probability of his ever having her — And now the other Match which I first mentioned comes on again, but the Gentleman having made such Vows to the other Lady





dy will not give Consent to his Friends desire, to have the Lady which he first Courted, but does intend to live single, — therefore I desire to be resolved, Whether the Gentleman may not lawfully break those Vows, since he made them in the heat of his Love, and not considering what he said?

*Ans.* If the Lady is willing to release the Gentleman from his Vows, he may Marry whom he pleases, if he can't prevail with her to do it, 'tis our Judgment that he can't dispose of himself otherwise.

*Quest. 7.* No one that ever I met with, suppos'd the French to be Aborigines, I desire to know what People they first came of?

*Ans.* The best Account we can meet with, is in *Ant. Mathews de Nobilitate*, Cap. 27. where he says expressly, that the French are Germans, which he endeavours to prove by many Teutonick Words which for a long time were preserved amongst them. *Chilpric* for Example, comes from *Hilp-rich* or *Helf-reich*, Rich in Help. They often gave a Latin termination for these barbarous Words, and there are divers Examples to be seen in the Capitularies of *Dagobert*, *Carloman*, *Charles the Great*, and *Charles the Bald*. Where we meet with *Morgan geba*, *Morgen-gift*, a Present that was given upon meeting in the Morning, *Kuppela carum*, a couple of Dogs. *Wantos*, *Mufflos*, *Wanten* *Moffels*. Gloves, Sleeves. *Clocca*, *Klokk*, a Bell. *Heribergum*, *Heribergare*. *Herberg*, *Herbergen*, to harbor or lodge. But as the Latin Tongue was most prevalent amongst the Gauls, the Franks insensibly forgot their own. From this Mixture there arose a pleasant Jargon, of which he gives us a Specimen. *Charles the Bald*, and *Lewis* King of the Germans, had concluded an Alliance at *Strasbourg*, *Charles* Swore in the German, and *Lewis* in the Roman Tongue. The Oath of *Lewis* runs thus,

*Pro Deo Amur. & pro Christiano populo & nostro commun Salva ment dist di in auant, in quant Deus Sabir & prodir me dunat, Si Salbarai io cist meon fradre Carlo & in adjudha, & in cadhuna cosa, Si con ont per droit Son fradre Salbar dist, in o quid il mi Altre si fazet. Et ab Lud her nul plaid nunquam prindrai qui me on viol Cist meon fradre Carlo in damno sit.*

Which Oath runs thus in English.

*For the love of God, and for the Christian People, and our common Defence, which ought to be from henceforth, as much as God shall give me to know, and to be able, I shall defend this my Brother Charles both by Succours, and in all things, as by Right ones Brother ought to be defended, in what another shall do to him, and I Lewis shall never undertake any Affair which by my Will shall be a Damage to this my Brother Charles.*

Almost all the Words of this old Language are fetched from the Latin, but the form of the Phrase, and the Declension of them is meerly German.

This caused once a very pleasant Equivocation. A poor Gaul who counterfeited lameness, having Addressed himself to the Convent of S. Gal, the Abbot commanded he should

be Bathed first, and then Cloathed. This Beggar entering the Bath, began to cry, *Calt est, Calt est, it is Hot, it is Hot*: But then *Calt* signifies in the German Tongue, Cold. The German Sacristan replied, I will make it hotter, and poured a whole Copper full of Water upon the poor Gaul, who began to cry out louder, *Eya mi Calt est, Calt est! How, what still Cold, saith the Sacristan? I will heat it enough; and taking a Pot of boiling Water, poured it into the Bath; at which the poor Beggar being beside himself, and quite forgetting that he was to Counterfeit the Lame Man, rises up, and leaps briskly out of the Bath.*

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